

CHAPTER 6: REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will draw together the threads of the whole paper, look at what was discussed and demonstrated in the previous four chapters and reflect upon and look at the conclusions that can be drawn from the data and discussions that have been presented. The data and the discussion from the five chapters will first be restated, then reflected upon and implications drawn.

The comparison between the three surveys of 1976, 1985 and 2003. This is original work because a longitudinal questionnaire survey of Zoroastrians in Europe has never been conducted in the UK. As well as a comparison of the three data sets gathered from the surveys of 1976, 1985 and 2003, a comparison of the groups of people in the 2003 survey who affirmed that they had answered the surveys in 1976 and 1985 or 1976 or 1985 as well as 2003 was made.

THE COMPARISON OF THE THREE SURVEYS, 1976, 1985, 2003

The three surveys were compared in detail in terms of the demographic characteristics of the respondents and in terms of the respondent's attitudes to the religious values of Zoroastrianism. The religious values were composed of religious practices, religious beliefs and the symbolic boundaries of Zoroastrianism. Support for the religious values was defined as support for the religious practices and beliefs but not for opening the symbolic boundaries. No support or low support for the religious beliefs was defined as no support, or low support for the religious practices and beliefs but support for opening the symbolic boundaries. The symbolic boundaries are a way of

conceptualising the barriers that Zoroastrians put between themselves and non-Zoroastrians and it is a way of defining who is a Zoroastrian and who is not a Zoroastrian. They can also be conceptualised as external purity laws, keeping potential pollutants such as non-Zoroastrians, away from religious ceremonies, priests, religious buildings and religious artefacts. The same questions from the three surveys were used for the analyses.

TABLE 1 THE QUESTIONS COMMON TO THE 1976, 1985 AND 2003 SURVEYS	
Religious Practices	
1. Were you taught about Zoroastrian faith at school?	
2. Do you pray at home?	
3. Do you wear the Sedreh/ Sudreh?	
4. Do you wear the Pushi/ Kusti?	
5. Which funeral practices would you prefer in Europe?	
Religious Beliefs	
6. Do you believe in the immortality of the soul?	
7. Do you believe in reincarnation?	
8. Do you believe in the resurrection of the body?	
9. Do you believe in Heaven and Hell?	
10. Are prayers for the dead are absolutely necessary?	
11. Are prayers for the dead are for the dead?	
12. Are prayers for the dead are for the living?	
13. Are prayers for the dead are meaningless?	
The Symbolic Boundaries of Zoroastrianism	
14. Regarding intermarriage do you?	
15. Can children of inter-marriages undergo Naujote?	
16. Can any non-Zoroastrian undergo Naujote?	
17. Can non-Zoroastrians enter the prayer rooms at any time?	

It was found that the respondents who took part in more than one survey were more supportive of the religious values compared with the people who had only taken part in the 2003 survey. This is not surprising since the respondents made the effort to answer, on more than one occasion, long questionnaires about themselves and

their religion and thus they must be committed Zoroastrians, to take such time and effort in support of their religion. There were 25% more men than women who completed the questionnaires from the three surveys. Is this public support of the religion on the part of the men and the women? This question is addressed during the discussion of the differences between women and men and their attitudes to the religious values of Zoroastrianism.

There was an increase in the response rate to the questions about religious beliefs, with a much lower 'no response' rate in 2003 than in the other two surveys, including the people who affirmed that they had completed the 1976 and/ or 1985 questionnaires in 2003 survey. This lower 'no response' rate indicates that more respondents are willing in the 2003 survey to commit to either affirming or rejecting the religious beliefs. They do not ignore the question, for whatever reasons, as was the case in the 1976 and 1985 surveys. Thus, there have been changes over the years of the surveys, 1976 to 2003, within the Zoroastrian community with regard to their attitudes to their religious beliefs. This increase could be due to the age profile of the respondents in the 2003 survey where the 60+age group was by far the largest group compared with 40-49 years in the 1976 and 1985 surveys. It could be related to the fact that there has been a change in the leadership at ZTFE since the 1985 survey and there was more emphasis on the religious aspects of being a Zoroastrian in Europe in 2003. The respondents from the 2003 survey were recruited in part from the membership of ZTFE and the response to the religious belief questions reflects this. Also, the participating membership in the 2003 survey from ZTFE tended to be older members of the organisation.

It was found that respondents married to non-Zoroastrians were less likely support to the religious values than the respondents who had Zoroastrian partners. This is a consistent research finding across the three surveys. Zoroastrianism does not proselytise itself and Zoroastrians find the subject of conversion a controversial matter; even the conversion of non-Zoroastrian spouses is still considered controversial by many Zoroastrians, especially if it is a woman who is the Zoroastrian. Since the 1906 law case in a Bombay court, India, Zoroastrian descent is seen through the male line only.¹ Some Parsis think that the ruling was just legalising

what in fact was a practice among the Parsis community.² It was then assumed that the children of a Parsi mother and non-Parsi father would take the religion of the father and the Parsi mother would also take her husband's religion. This, for the Parsi woman, conflicted with the Zoroastrian idea that religion is given at birth and cannot be changed. Even today the children of such marriages, especially if the mother is the Zoroastrian, are not encouraged to undergo Naujote. Thus, non-Zoroastrians are not officially welcomed and the Zoroastrian partners views the religion differently from the Zoroastrians who are married to Zoroastrians.

¹ Palsetia J., *The Parsis of India, preservation of identity in Bombay City*, Leiden:

E.J. Brill, 2001, pp. 226-251

² Over the past four years, 2003-2007, there have been many letters to the editor of *Parsiana*, a Zoroastrian magazine based and published in Mumbai, India, regarding this practice of Parsi men marrying non-Parsi women and their children brought up as Zoroastrians. In fact it is a recurring theme in the letters and on the editorial page. One letter, October 2003, p19, suggested that it was a way to ensure that there were enough Parsis to work in the Dohkmas which for Zoroastrians is the most polluting work imaginable. In the 7th of October 2009 issue there were again letters on this subject. Meanwhile in the body of the magazine there was a report of an Irani priest in Vienna initiating several Iranian Muslims and one Australian woman. There are plans to open a Fire Temple in Vienna but meanwhile in Mumbai and parts of the Diaspora the 'old' arguments rage.

Also today Zoroastrians still subscribe to the idea that one's religion is given at birth and cannot be changed.

The Iranian Zoroastrians had different types of support for the religious values than Parsi Zoroastrians. The Iranians were less likely to be found in the groups of Zoroastrian who supported/ rejected of all the religious values, except for the groups where they supported all of the questions which dealt with opening the symbolic boundaries. The Iranians have a different religious and cultural background from the Parsis. Most of them were political refugees from a country where their religion was barely tolerated by the government and their Muslim neighbours. They are tolerant about conversion of non-Zoroastrians and the children of Zoroastrian/ non-Zoroastrian marriages undergoing Naujote, and the opening of the buildings and religious ceremonies to non-Zoroastrians, but they are not supportive of Zoroastrian/ non-Zoroastrian marriages. These ideas reflect the ideas of Iran and their background of growing up in a Muslim country. The Iranian Zoroastrians would prefer that Zoroastrian/ non-Zoroastrian marriages did not take place, but they accepted them when they did.

Across the three surveys it was found that respondents who were born in Europe or who came as young children gave less support for the religious practices and beliefs and wanted to open the symbolic boundaries more than the respondents who came to Europe as adults. The respondents who came from nuclear families and who had children under 18 years of age were more supportive of the religious practices and beliefs than respondents from extended families or families where there were no children under 18 years of age. Also, respondents who came from a rural or urban background to Europe were more supportive of the religious

practices and beliefs than the respondents who came from a metropolitan background. Respondents who had received their education in Europe gave less support for the religious practices and beliefs and wanted to open the symbolic boundaries more than the respondents who were educated outside Europe. Similarly, respondents with a scientific education gave less support to the religious practices and beliefs and wanted to open the symbolic boundaries more than respondents who did not have a scientific education. The higher the occupational status of the respondent's parents the more likely it was that the respondents gave less support for the religious practices and beliefs and wanted to open the symbolic boundaries. The mother's occupational status is important in the analyses of the women's attitudes to the six purity laws where the women whose mothers had occupations outside the home were less likely to support the purity laws than the women whose mothers were homemakers.

The data from the three surveys was also analysed by looking at a comparison of female and male respondents and how they replied to the questions. In the analyses of the 1976 survey it was found that the women were less supportive of the religious practices and the opening of the symbolic boundaries than the men, but more supportive of the religious beliefs and teaching children religious beliefs and practices. In the analyses of the 1985 survey it was found that the women were less supportive of the religious practices, apart from praying daily, and they were less supportive of having their children taught to pray than men, but more women than men affirmed that their children had undergone Naujote and that they would teach their children to pray. The women were more supportive than men of opening the symbolic boundaries, apart from the question of any non-Zoroastrian undergoing Naujote, and they had more support for religious beliefs than the

men. In general in the previous two surveys, the women were more supportive of religious beliefs than the men and less supportive of the religious practices. In the 2003 survey the women were less supportive of the religious practices than the men apart from teaching their children about Zoroastrianism and its religious practices and wanting a Dokhma funeral for themselves. The women were more supportive than the men with regard to religious beliefs apart from belief in resurrection of the body. They were less supportive than men for changes in the symbolic boundaries. On the whole the women in the 2003 survey were more supportive than men of the religious beliefs and less supportive than men of the religious practices. Thus, there is a thread running through the analyses of the women in the three surveys being more supportive of religious beliefs and of no change to the symbolic boundaries of Zoroastrianism than men, but less supportive of religious practices. Men were on the whole more supportive of the religious practices than the women. Could this difference be because the women view religion in a different way from men? Women support the religious beliefs at a higher level than the men and this suggests that they might view religion as a private matter whereas men view religion as a public matter and their statement of support for their religion is demonstrated by their religious practices. It has been noted that 25% more men than women answered all three survey questionnaires and some of the male respondents who answered the question about which prayers are powerful gave long list of prayers, whereas most of the women gave one or two and at the most three prayers. It was an opportunity for some men to show their knowledge of Zoroastrian prayers in public.

The 2003 data set is a large data set and a 'snapshot' picture of the respondents to the questionnaires in the autumn of 2003 was

generated. It is one of a highly educated group of people who had attained high levels of occupational status, with their fathers and some of the mothers having high occupational status too. Twenty nine percent of the respondents had had a scientific education and 39% had had a postgraduate education. At every education level, at least 20% had attained that level in Europe, but the highest percentage levels were attained in India, except for postgraduate education. The majority of the respondents came from the sub-continent before living in Europe and the majority of the respondents were over 60 years of age. Twenty five percent of the respondents who had partners, had partners who were not Zoroastrian and 71% had extended families in Europe, 5% nuclear and 13% had no family in Europe. The majority, 48%, of respondents came to Europe from a metropolitan background, 27% from an urban or rural background and 25% did not respond to this question. These facts have implications for the respondent's attitudes to the religious values as was found in the comparisons and analyses of the 1976, 1985 and 2003 data.

The analyses of the data dealing with other aspects of Zoroastrian life in Europe from the 2003 survey found that the respondents on the whole stayed in contact with other Zoroastrians through communication media or newspapers, magazines, or being part of Zoroastrian organisations. They recognised dangers to the community in Europe and supported actions to be taken by the community in Europe although the actions were concerned with the social and religious life of the Zoroastrians and not to do with the perceived dangers. They were divided in whom should determine policy for Zoroastrians in Europe. This is a multicultural group of people who speak, read and write more than one language, feel that 'they belong' in more than one place and feel that their 'homeland' is in more than one place. Few of the

respondents 14, 2%, felt that they had no homeland. Thirty six percent, 216, of the respondents affirmed that they had 'never' experienced discrimination due to 'race' or religion in any of the categories, from occupation to television, listed in the questionnaire. Some of the respondents socialise with non-Zoroastrians in Europe and some of the respondents, a minority, affirmed that they did not do so.

It should be noted that there have been marked changes across the three surveys in the attitudes of the respondents to the symbolic boundaries of Zoroastrianism, with a definite increase in the support for changing the boundaries, regardless of whether the respondents had completed one, two or all three surveys. This fact was important for the analyses of the six purity laws, because the attitudes of the respondents to the symbolic boundaries is the data in the 1976 and 1985 data sets that was closest to the Zoroastrian purity laws. Thus, it could be surmised that the attitudes of the respondents to the six purity laws had probably changed over the years of domicile in Europe and that Zoroastrians now viewed the six purity laws in a way that is different from the view they had when they first arrived in Europe, and it is also probably different from the views of Zoroastrians in the sub-continent of India or Iran in 2003. It was found in the 2003 data, that the new, post year 2000, immigrant respondents had more knowledge of Zoroastrian purity laws in general than other respondents.

MEN AND WOMEN AND THE SIX PURITY LAWS

The second area of focus of the thesis follows directly from the three surveys: the questions about purity laws were added to the 2003 questionnaire after the considerations about what was missing from the research data gathered and analysed from both

the 1976 and 1985 surveys. The high response rate to the questions about the six purity laws from the 2003 survey of Zoroastrians in Europe, demonstrates the importance of these laws to Zoroastrians in Europe. The women always affirm at a much higher percentage rate than the men, on average 20 percentage points, and conversely the men always reject the six purity laws at a much high rate than the women. The ranking by percentage affirmation of the six purity laws by the respondents generally goes from the highest to the lowest in the order of: 'Menstruating women should avoid the Favardigan/ Muktaḍ ceremonies', 'Menstruating women should avoid the prayer room', 'Menstruating women should avoid Jashans', 'Menstruating women should avoid the priest', 'women should observe the childbirth rituals' and 'Menstruating women should avoid prayer'. The percentage rejection is always the opposite of this list, but there can be differences in the percentages between affirmation and rejection because of the 'no response' rate. The majority of the respondents affirm the first four purity laws, but the majority reject the last two purity laws. Men barely change the rankings of the purity laws and their rankings remain consistent throughout the analyses. The women change the ranking of the purity laws, but the changes are between laws adjacent in the rankings and it only involves a few percentage points or a few women. There is one exception to this for the women, and that is of consistently ranking 'menstruating women avoidance of prayer' fifth and not sixth when the men and the total group of respondents ranked it fifth. The women rank the observance of child birth rituals last in the rankings of the six purity laws. Is this because the observance of child birth rituals concerns women and is centred on the home? Therefore it is ranked last by the women as not being as important as the purity laws which concern the men? Is this because it is difficult in Europe, to practice all the complex rituals associated

with child birth? Doctors Mistry and Cama found that in Gujarat, India, seclusion during menstruation had almost disappeared but that not visiting the fire temple and places of worship in the family home were still observed.³ There was a positive response to the questions on marriage and childbirth rituals and the authors, Cama and Mistry, came to the conclusion that 'celebratory rituals are followed regularly' by these Zoroastrians in 2004.⁴ Although seclusion of women during menstruation has died out as a practice the belief might still be there for Zoroastrians in India, and perhaps the rituals associated with child birth are declining in the same way in Europe, because it is impractical to practice some of them today although the belief by Zoroastrians, is still there in the Zoroastrian religious tenets regarding the purity laws. The men rank avoidance of the prayer by menstruating women last as do the London priests, who can see no point in the woman not praying as long as it is in silence and away from religious objects, and for the men it is more important that the women observe the child birth rituals than they avoid prayer. According to the two most active priests from London, menstruating women can continue to pray during menstruation provided they take the necessary precautions to not to touch religious objects, persons or places and one priest stipulated that they should pray in silence and not to speak their prayers out aloud.⁵ The purity law that is ranked fifth by the men and sixth by the women is that of 'women should observe the rituals after child birth'. Logically, because of the Zoroastrian theological concept of pollution, this purity law should be high on the list of rankings because of the pollution

³ Cama S. and Mistry R., *op cit*, *Oral Traditions*, p. 11

⁴ -----, *op cit*, p. 12

⁵ Ervad Bhedwar and Ervad Sethna, telephone conversations, *op cit*

associated with child birth due to the loss of blood and other bodily substances. Does this indicate that the respondents were not cognisant with the theological doctrines which are the basis of the purity laws? Future research into the knowledge of the theological doctrines as the basis of the purity laws could illuminate this problem. Also, why this particular purity law was ranked so low is a subject for further investigation in a detailed survey that concentrates on the purity laws.⁶

Within the sub-groups of Zoroastrians there are interesting differences in the strength of the percentage of affirmation or rejection of the six purity laws and to the ranking of them. The women and men who affirm all six purity laws follow a general pattern of being older, coming to Europe as adults, coming from Pakistan (women only, not the men), Africa, and India. As a group, they are not as highly educated or have as high status occupations as the women and men who reject the six purity laws. The women and men who rejected all the six purity laws have younger age profile than the affirmative group: a third of them were born in Europe and a third had come to Europe as young children. A much higher percentage of the 'rejecting' groups of women and men was or had been married to non-Zoroastrians than for the 'affirming' groups. The 'rejecting' groups of women and men had a higher percentage of postgraduates who had studied in Europe and they had a much higher percentage of scientifically educated women and men than the 'affirming' group. In addition, the 'rejecting' groups had a much higher percentage of professional parents than the 'affirming' groups. These results are what would be expected from the data generated by the 1976 and 1985 surveys about Zoroastrians attitudes to their religious practices and beliefs.⁷ Also, the majority of members of the 'rejecting' groups did not live

⁶ See Appendix E, Future research, E

in the Greater London area. This finding reflects the data from the 1985 survey where the scattered groups were less supportive of the religious practices, beliefs and the symbolic boundaries of Zoroastrianism than the respondents who lived in and around the greater London area of South East England.⁸ The significance is that Zoroastrian Diaspora scattered groups always have a broader spectrum of attitudes to the religious values of Zoroastrianism. Being in contact in Europe with fellow Zoroastrians through Zoroastrian house in London, helps to preserve the religious traditions and thus these people have a less broad spectrum of attitudes to the religious values.

There are demographic similarities and differences between the women and the men and their attitudes to the six purity laws with more similarities than differences between the women and the men. Coming to Europe as an adult seems to be a dominant factor in determining knowledge of and support for the six purity laws for both women and men. Thus, growing up, education and socialisation of the respondents outside Europe are important factors in determining the respondent's attitudes to the six purity laws. Again, this reflects the research findings from the 1976 and

⁷ See chapters 2 and 3

Mehta G.M.T., unpublished monograph Bryn Mawr College,

USA, *Zoroastrians in Britain: A survey conducted by the*

University of Manchester and the Open University, July 1981

Mehta G.M.T., *op cit*, *The Parsees in Britain: The Survival of a*

Religious and Racial Minority

Hinnells J.R., *op cit*, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora, Religion and*

Migration, pp. 741-799

⁸ *ibid*

1985 surveys with regard to Zoroastrians' attitudes to their religious practices and beliefs.⁹ What are the implications with regard to the Zoroastrian who were born, educated and socialised in Europe? It could be assumed that support for the six purity laws will diminish as more Zoroastrians grow up in Western Europe, but the reality is more complex than this simple assumption, as was demonstrated in the analyses of the sub-groups of Zoroastrians according to age, marriage partners, education and occupation. The attitudes to the six purity laws of the generations of Zoroastrians that are born, educated and socialised in Europe are and will be different from those of the Zoroastrians who are born, educated and socialised outside Europe. The difference can be in terms of the ways the purity laws are ordered, in terms of importance, or the ways that they are observed or not observed, depending upon the social environment and the practicality of observing the six purity laws. Purity and pollution are central tenets of Zoroastrianism and the purity laws will be known, if not practiced, by Zoroastrians of the generations born in Europe: if they only undergo Naujote they have taken part in a purity ritual.

The two most important differences between women and men and their attitudes to the six purity laws were that the women were roughly equal in their numbers in terms of affirming or rejecting all six purity laws, whereas two and half times more men rejected all six purity laws than affirmed them. There was little difference in the age profile of the men who affirmed all six purity laws and the men who rejected all six purity laws, whereas for the women the age profile of the rejecting group was much younger than that

⁹ Mehta G.M.T., *op cit*, *Zoroastrians in Britain: A survey*

conducted by the University of Manchester and the Open University,

of the affirming group. These six purity laws concern Zoroastrian women and not men, except the disruption to the household, if the women keep the six purity laws. Quite often the women go the Fire Temple or the prayer rooms or take part in the religious ceremonies during menses because they are needed to control the children and there is no one to delegate their responsibilities to. This happens in India as well as in Europe.¹⁰

Professor Choksy's comments via an e-mail to the author, on his research into Zoroastrians and the purity rituals surrounding women menses and child birth were presented in chapter 2. He did not find any difference between his interviewees in their responses to the purity laws except for perhaps age, with older interviewees accepting the purity laws more readily than the younger interviewees. These were face to face interviews conducted over nearly two decades.¹¹ In the 2003 survey, however, which was a 'snapshot' of the Zoroastrian community in Europe in 2003, it was found that there were many differences between attitudes of the respondents to the purity laws, not only on the grounds of age, which was complex, but also, between women and men and different sub-groups of Zoroastrians. There were some anomalies too. The age group 30 to 39 years of which a high proportion were born in Europe and are second generation European Zoroastrians, affirm the six purity laws in a way that suggests they are maintaining their religion in the manner of their parents. Are they the children of Zoroastrian who emigrated from Africa to Europe? There is no data in the 2003 data set to test this hypothesis. In the

¹⁰ The author in discussion with J.K. Choksy at the 2006 SOAS conference about the practice of the purity laws in India..

¹¹ Choksy J. K, e-mail, *op cit*

2003 questionnaire the question about the respondent's parent's country of origin listed two places, UK or 'other' and most respondents just ticked 'other'. In the next survey it will be important to ask for the respondent's parent's country of origin without specifying any place names in the questionnaire. It has been found with other immigrant groups in North America, that the second generation returns to the religion of the parents but it is interpreted through the experience and life of the second generation, thus it is a different religion from that of the parents. Kaufmann notes that in the US 'Second-generation immigrants in America often become more religious than their parents, only to see their children become less religious than they are'.¹² He also notes that in Europe 'We do not know whether the children of Muslims who are born in Europe will overwhelmingly marry other Muslims and raise their children in the faith'. However, secularisation is as powerful a force as religion and Europe is largely a secular society and it is expected that Muslims in the third and fourth generations in Europe, will become secularised.¹³ In an extreme case of second generation immigrants becoming more religious than their parents, a few second generation Muslim men in Europe are not only turning to a more fundamental version of the religion of their parents, but also turning to violence against their societies, perpetrating atrocities such as the underground train bombings in London in 2006. In the case of these Muslim men, it has been explained by the media in terms of lack of incorporation into mainstream life in Europe, especially lack of education and jobs.¹⁴ It must be more complex than this simple analysis.¹⁵ The third and fourth generation Muslims in Europe may drop the religion as they join the mainstream attitudes to religion, which is largely that of secularisation: religious organisations are used for marking births, marriages and deaths. Many religious denominations in Europe are facing aging and

falling congregations, except for Christian evangelicalism and the religions that first generation immigrants bring to their new homes and lives.

The Iranian Zoroastrians' responses are important because they are consistent with each other and the majority tend to reject the six purity laws. They were only 24 Iranians in the data set and these results should be viewed with caution. It has already been noted that the background of Iranians is different from that of the Parsis and that is part of the explanation of their different attitudes to their religious practices and beliefs, including the six purity laws.

Some members of the community regard women who have married non-Zoroastrians as no longer Zoroastrian and try to exclude them from the Zoroastrian religion, but in spite of this, some of these inter-married women continue to support the six purity laws. More Zoroastrian women, 54, who had married non-Zoroastrian completed the 2003 questionnaire than the 1976 or 1985 questionnaires. For the 2003 survey two organisations supplied addresses, one of them WZO and the other ZTFE. WZO is considered to be more welcoming to Zoroastrian women who have married non-Zoroastrians than ZTFE. However, this increase in response by Zoroastrian women who had married non-Zoroastrians is not connected with the organisations, WZO and ZTFE. Of these 54 women eight were members of ZTFE only and four were members of WZO only, thus 42 were members of both organisations. Ervad Bhedwar of ZTFE has stated that more women who had married non-Zoroastrians were asking him to perform the Nahn ceremony after the birth of their child.¹⁶ These women were taking part in activities associated with their religion so there is a change going on within the community with regard to

women who marry non-Zoroastrians. Forty of these women who had married non-Zoroastrians and completed the 2003 questionnaire, were either born in Europe, came as young children or came before 1960, so they were women who were likely to reject the symbolic boundaries of Zoroastrianism, but confident enough to keep their religion when they married non-Zoroastrians and to insist upon keeping it. It is with the second generation of

¹² Kaufman Eric, *Prospect Magazine*, Issue 128, November 2006

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ Hare Bernard, *It's business as usual at the 'terrorists breeding ground'*, *The Guardian*, 26 July 2006

Seabrook Jeremy, *Alienation can be a humane response to globalisation*, *The Guardian*, 25 August, 2006

Taylor Peter, *A reason to hate*, *The Guardian*, 1 September, 2006

Filder Stephen, *Alienation to Annihilation*, *The Financial Times*, 6 July, 2007 Wormser Richard, *American Islam: Growing up Muslim in America*, New York, Walker & Company, 2002.

¹⁵ Crawford Leslie, *Spain's Migrants 'seek jobs not conquest'*, *The Financial Times*, 8 September, 2007

Perlez Jane, *On 9/11 anniversary, looking inward to explain terrorist attacks*, *International Herald Tribune*, 10 September, 2007

Aminah Mohammed-Arif, *Salaam America: South Asian Muslims in New York*, United Kingdom, Anthem Press, 2002

women who were born or who came to Europe as young children, that the phenomenon of returning to the religion of their parents, but on different terms from that of their parents is observed.

The levels of education and type of education of the respondent and the attitudes of these 2003 survey respondents to the six purity laws follow the pattern that was expected from the 1985 data.¹⁷ However, women and men with only secondary schooling have a lower affirmation rate of the six purity laws than would be expected from the 1976 and 1985 data. Also, the age and place of origin of these particular respondents and their attitudes to the six purity laws goes against what would have been expected from the 1976 and 1985 data.¹⁸ Thirty percent of them came from Africa where opportunities for education beyond secondary school were non-existent. If the family could not afford to send students abroad for further education, then they had to go to work. These are respondents who missed out on formal education, but not on thinking about their religion and their life experiences; their attitudes to the six purity laws reflect this.

¹⁶ Ervad Bhedwar, telephone conversation, *op cit*

¹⁷ See chapters 2 and 3

Mehta G.M.T., unpublished monograph Bryn Mawr College, USA, *Zoroastrians in Britain: A survey conducted by the University of Manchester and the Open University*, July 1981
Mehta G.M.T., *op cit*, *The Parsees in Britain: The Survival of a Religious and Racial Minority*
Hinnells J.R., *op cit*, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora, Religion and Migration*, pp. 741-799

¹⁸ *ibid*

The respondent's occupation and the relationship with the six purity laws follow the trend that would have been expected from the 1985 data, except for the respondent's with blue-collar occupations.¹⁹ When the educational levels of these women and men with blue-collar occupations are examined it is found that a number of them have high educational levels. However, the numbers involved are small and should be viewed with caution, but it suggests that education levels are more important than occupation when examining Zoroastrians' attitudes to their religious values. Women whose mothers worked outside the home gave less support for the purity laws than the women whose mothers had solely been homemakers. For the men it made little difference whether their mother worked outside the home in terms of their attitudes to the purity laws. Are these Zoroastrian women with mothers who worked outside the home becoming more assertive in their attitudes to Zoroastrian religious values as their mothers gave them a role model of economic independence, and therefore independence in attitudes to life and living? Certainly there are changes within the community, with the women who have married non-Zoroastrians becoming more assertive in their demands to keep their religion and pass it on to their children, and also women whose mothers worked outside the home giving less support for the purity laws than the women whose mothers were homemakers.

In future surveys, questions about the practice of the six purity laws should be included and then hypotheses could be tested that the women who affirm the religious beliefs of Zoroastrianism also affirm the six purity laws, and they are likely to practice the six purity laws if they are able, given practical considerations, to do so

¹⁹ *ibid*

in Europe.²⁰ Also, the hypothesis could be tested that women's practice of the six purity laws will be less than their support for their belief in the six purity laws, as was the case in the relationship between women's religious beliefs and religious practices: their support of the religious practices were less than their support for the religious beliefs.²¹ It is expected that questions about the actual practice of the purity laws will have a lower response rate than questions about belief or knowledge of the purity laws. Zoroastrians might consider that it is intrusive for such questions to be asked in a questionnaire, they might consider the practice of the purity laws a private matter, they might consider that it is controversial to respond to such questions when there is so much discussion about them within the community, and they might consider that the knowledge about the practice of the purity laws is for community information only. Zoroastrians do not discuss or broadcast the centrality of purity and pollution to Zoroastrianism with non-Zoroastrians, either in their books or in interfaith dialogues. If the purity laws which affect men as well as women, such as the disposal of cut hair and cut nails, were researched, their practice of these purity laws will higher than the women's practice of their six purity laws. It has been demonstrated that men support the religious practices higher than the women and also, if men view their religion as a public matter rather than a private matter, then the practice of the purity laws is a public statement of their commitment to their religion.

Mary Boyce found that the practice of the purity laws was beginning to be in abeyance in some families, but not generally, in Iran in the 1960s, although knowledge about them was still high amongst the villages she surveyed.²² In a sense the same situation

²⁰ See Appendix E, Future research, A

²¹ See Appendix E, Future research, A

pertained in Europe in 2003, although the knowledge about the laws was probably less than in Iran in the 1960s. The 2003 questionnaire was not detailed enough to make a comparison with Boyce's work but the six purity laws that were researched indicated that the respondents had knowledge of these six laws, even if they did not believe in them. Zoroastrian women and men in Europe, in 2003, continued to affirm four of the six purity laws at high levels, and of the purity laws researched in this thesis, that which is closest to death, , 'Menstruating women avoiding the Favardigan/ Muktaḍ ceremonies' was consistently ranked first by the respondents. The purity laws associated with religious places or people, 'Menstruating women should avoid the prayer room', 'Menstruating women should avoid Jashans', and 'Menstruating women should avoid the priest', were consistently ranked second, third and fourth. The purity law dealing with 'Menstruating women should avoid prayer' was consistently ranked sixth by the men but consistently fifth by the women. Professor Choksy concludes, both in his book on purity and pollution in Zoroastrianism and to the author by e-mail, that purity laws are part of the tenets of Zoroastrianism and accepted by Zoroastrians as such, and this has been convincingly demonstrated in the analyses of the data from the 2003 survey.²³

The concepts of purity and pollution are central to the Zoroastrian religion. Thus, it was found in the analyses of the 1985 data that the attitudes of the respondents to the symbolic boundaries could not be satisfactorily explained in statistical terms, because

²² Boyce Mary, *op cit*, *A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism*, pp. 92-138

²³ Choksy J.K, *op cit*, *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism*, *Triumph over evil*, p.137; e-mail, *op cit*

variables dealing with purity were not in the data. The introduction of questions about six of the purity laws in the 2003 questionnaire added a new and central dimension to the longitudinal study of Zoroastrians in Europe. Not only has this new dimension added to an understanding of Zoroastrians in Europe, it has also opened up new areas of research into not only Zoroastrians but other religious groups in Europe who have religious tenets concerned with purity and pollution.²⁴

The belief of, or knowledge by, Zoroastrians in Europe, of Zoroastrian religious tenets regarding six of their purity laws, is still there and strongly expressed in the twenty first century, three millennia after the death of Zarathustra.

ENDNOTES

²⁴ See Appendix E, Future research, H